



Joshua Lederberg

Campus Radicals' Booby Trap Is to Invite Brutal Reaction

"ETHIOPIA'S gain is our loss," I thought when I read that Dr. John Summerskill had abruptly thrown up his hands and escaped from the campus of San Francisco State College. My friend had been president there for the past two years, and my main wonder was how he had managed to take it for so long.

A pinch of insanity and a large dose of human concern for the real needs of students, and of our whole society were at least two of the necessary ingredients. He perceived very well that his campus, even more than most, was a microcosm of the conflicts that rend our culture. About all he couldn't be sure of was which threats of assassination would materialize first—black or white, left or right.

He did much more than most men could have done to mediate in a crossfire of implacable hostility and now he is temporarily well out of it in a country that must seem far more civilized than

California or Morningside Heights.

MANY OF US in slightly less responsible positions still feel that the university can be saved as a center of sanity in a mad world but it will take a large measure of our own sanity, diplomacy and luck to do it.

Dr. Summerskill was my main tutor in practical political science. He made no bones about his realization (before I heard it anywhere else) that the radical left had the destruction of the university as its aim. Conspiring with it is a radical right, close to the center of power in California, that has had similar aims all along, clearly expressed on issues like academic freedom. Questions like student government and discipline were pseudo-issues, platforms for recruiting the uncommitted center.

Dr. Summerskill hoped to confuse the enemy with a novel policy of nonviolent administration and by open assertion of his own profound sympathies for most of the real grievances that underlie the massive center of student anger. It is impossible to judge his experiment—the story is not yet over, and in any case he never had enough authority and support to carry it out.

No self-respecting campus can endure a year nowadays without some significant incident. There is too much for youth to be angry about to let it go by without a gesture of defiance. There is a real meaning in that message: that we are leaving the world to them in an intolerable mess, and that even law and order or conventional success are not such sacred values that they excuse blind or deliberate inaction. The radicals' efforts to exploit this anger should not

deafen us against the voices of our own heirs. Blind fury, such as dominated Columbia's campus (my own alma mater), is hardly to be excused, but if we react without understanding it, we are only asking for more trouble tomorrow. This is exactly the radicals' booby trap, that they can consolidate the alienation of the diffusely angry by inviting the brutal reaction of authority.

WHEN IT comes to charges of frustrating the educational process, the establishment has its own sins to answer to. President Kirk added little to the luster of objective inquiry by his premature commitment of Columbia University to the Strickland filter, but this admitted error never invited threats of suspension.

We deplore violence as a method of solving problems, but the bombers still peacefully illuminate Vietnam with American wisdom. Educators' urgent pleas about the impact of Selective Service policy on graduate enrollment and university teaching go unanswered and ignored.

Adding insult to injury is the arrogant remark that "the board owns the university" when the members are trustees for a social purpose that they could not conceivably fulfill without the dedication of students and faculty alike. Or should they start paying corporate income and real estate taxes?

Re-establishing our common purpose must become our main goal; dialogue, not recriminations, will temper tomorrow's protests.

Listen, will you?

© 1968, The Washington Post Co.